

GILC 63
CAMERON

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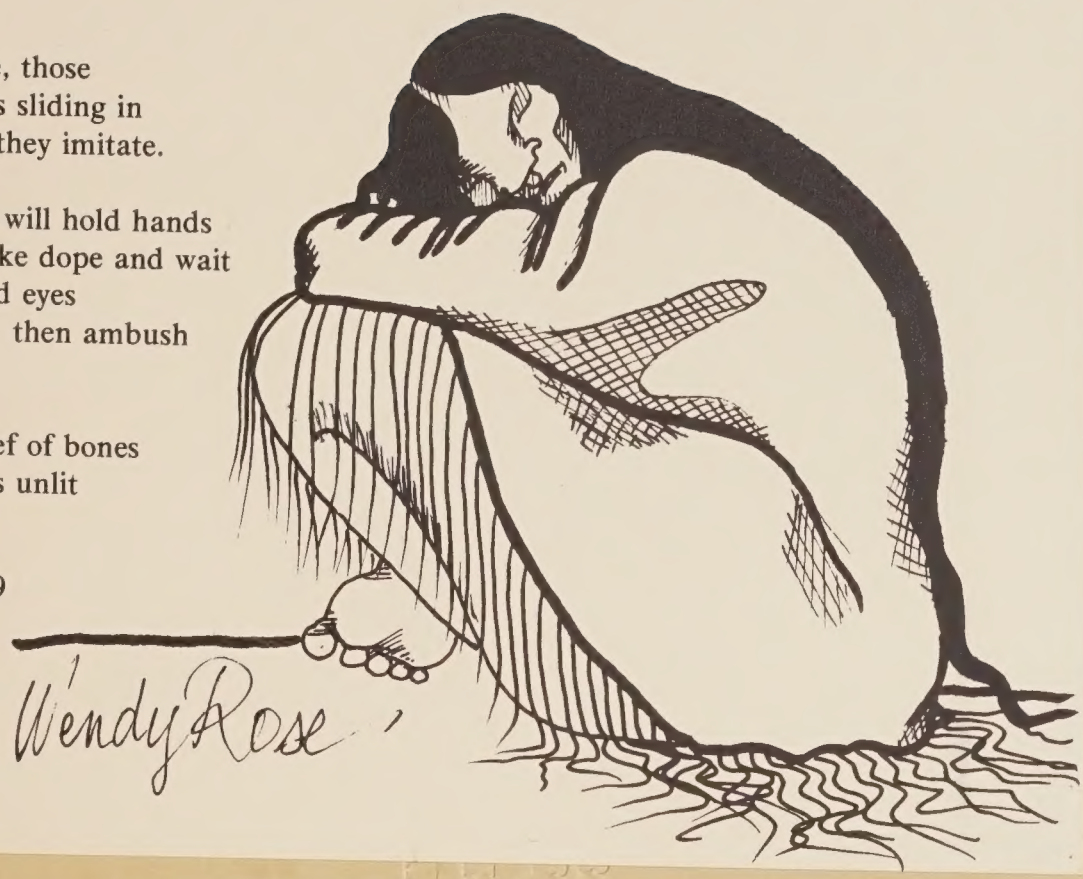
GHOSTS
...listening to Helene sing

Here they come, those
tricky memories sliding in
like the ghosts they imitate.

Tomorrow they will hold hands
like lovers, smoke dope and wait
for my darkened eyes
to half-open then ambush

and age me,
a whiskered thief of bones
leaving gaslights unlit
in my lungs.

Brooklyn 1/2/79
—Wendy Rose



Elegy for Chief Sealth [1786-1866]

*The white man will never be alone.
Let him be just and deal kindly with my people,
For the dead are not powerless.*

Compromised by sorrow,
You stand at the rim of a diminished forest,
Your face leathured by salt winds
From the Sound inlets,
The sacred camas islands of your fathers,
And chant for your eightieth moon going blind.

Because the guardian spirits
Coot all year of the white man's flood
From the Eastern seaboard,
You hear death call you to burn alone
In the fire of the black sun.
The waves of ships, covered wagons,
Broke your arrows, pierced your shield,
Silenced the eagle in your heart, long paralyzed
By their screams for Alaska gold.

Yet, as if drumbeats rising from the rocks,
Those first Duwamish dancers
With feet the colors of daybreak,
The remaining tribes regain
A part of the soil; turn your people's grief
To a small joy, like the sight of heron,
Shifting in the reeds.

—Duane Niatum



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